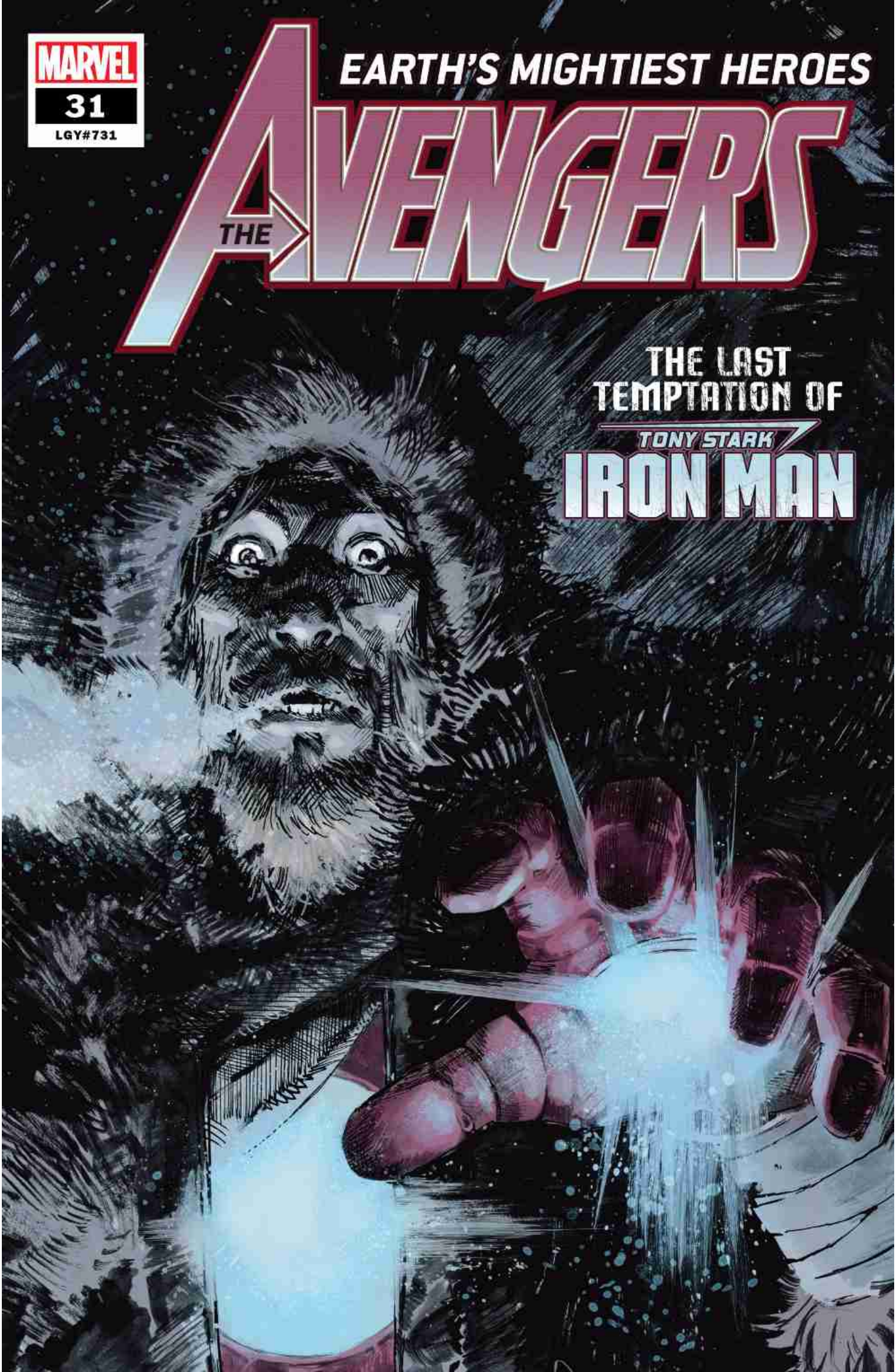
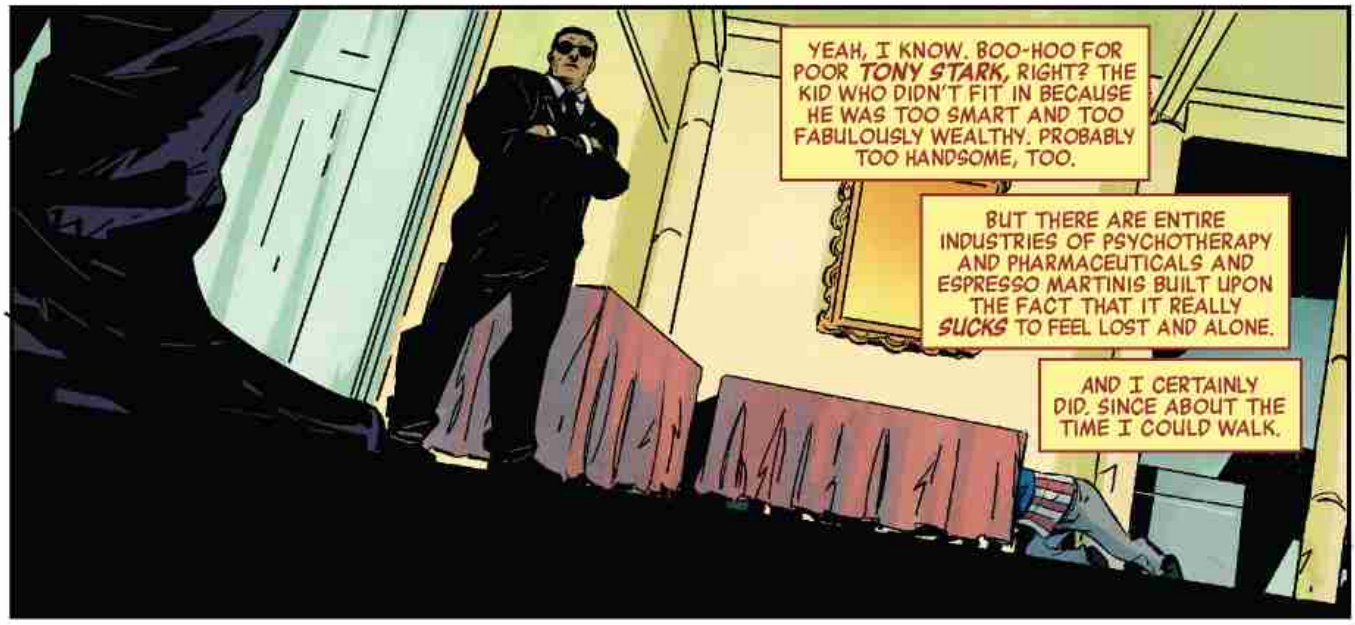

MARVEL
31
LGY#731
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES
THE AVENGERS
THE LAST TEMPTATION OF
TONY STARK
IRON MAN

YEARS AGO.
MY FATHER WAS A MAN OF SCIENCE.
AND SECRETS.

AND I WAS A VERY BRIGHT KID WHO GOT BORED VERY EASILY. AND WHO ALREADY HAD THE COMPULSION TO GO WHERE HE DIDN'T BELONG...

...BECAUSE I DIDN'T SEEM TO BELONG MUCH OF ANYWHERE.
STILL KINDA DON'T, I GUESS. IN OTHER WORDS, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN REALLY SUPER GOOD AT GETTING INTO LOTS OF TROUBLE.
X-RAY CONTACTS TEST IS A GO.


YEAH, I KNOW. BOO-HOO FOR POOR TONY STARK, RIGHT? THE KID WHO DIDN'T FIT IN BECAUSE HE WAS TOO SMART AND TOO FABULOUSLY WEALTHY. PROBABLY TOO HANDSOME, TOO.
BUT THERE ARE ENTIRE INDUSTRIES OF PSYCHOTHERAPY AND PHARMACEUTICALS AND ESPRESSO MARTINIS BUILT UPON THE FACT THAT IT REALLY SUCKS TO FEEL LOST AND ALONE.
AND I CERTAINLY DID. SINCE ABOUT THE TIME I COULD WALK.

THOSE WHO WISH TO MAKE AN OFFERING, COME FORWARD.
ONE THING THE MOVIES ALWAYS GET RIGHT: SUPER RICH PEOPLE LOVE TO DO SUPER RICH PEOPLE KINDA THINGS.

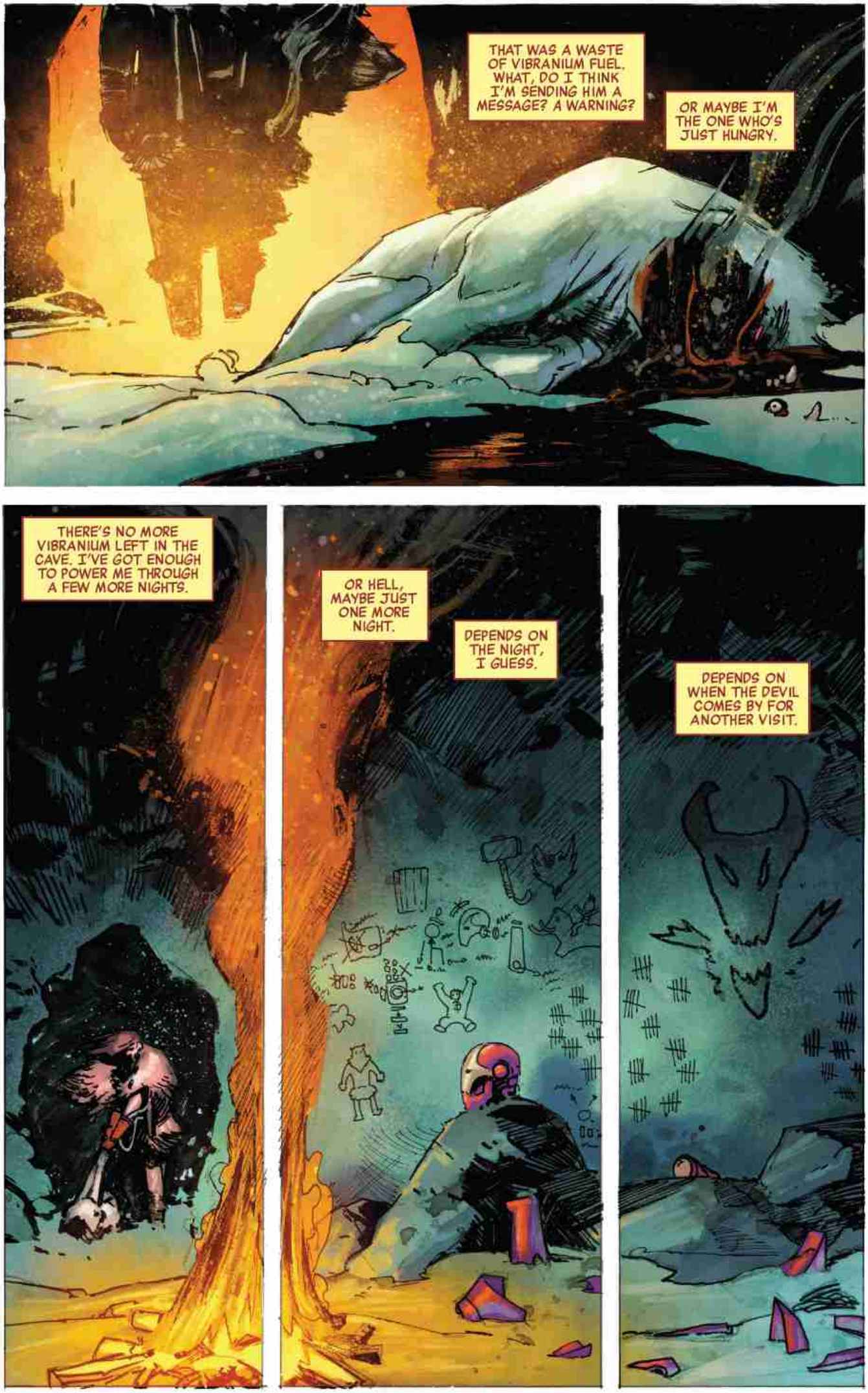
WHAT DO YOU SEEK FROM THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE? THE MASTER OF ALL HOUSES?
WE SEEK A GIFT.
THE GIFT OF TIME.
MY DAD THREW PARTIES THAT ARE STILL THE STUFF OF BACCHANALIAN LEGEND--EVEN AMONG PEOPLE WHO ARE USED TO FLAUNTING ALL THE LAWS OF GOD AND MAN FOR EVERY BIRTHDAY, HALLOWEEN OR RANDOM SATURDAY NIGHT IN FEBRUARY.

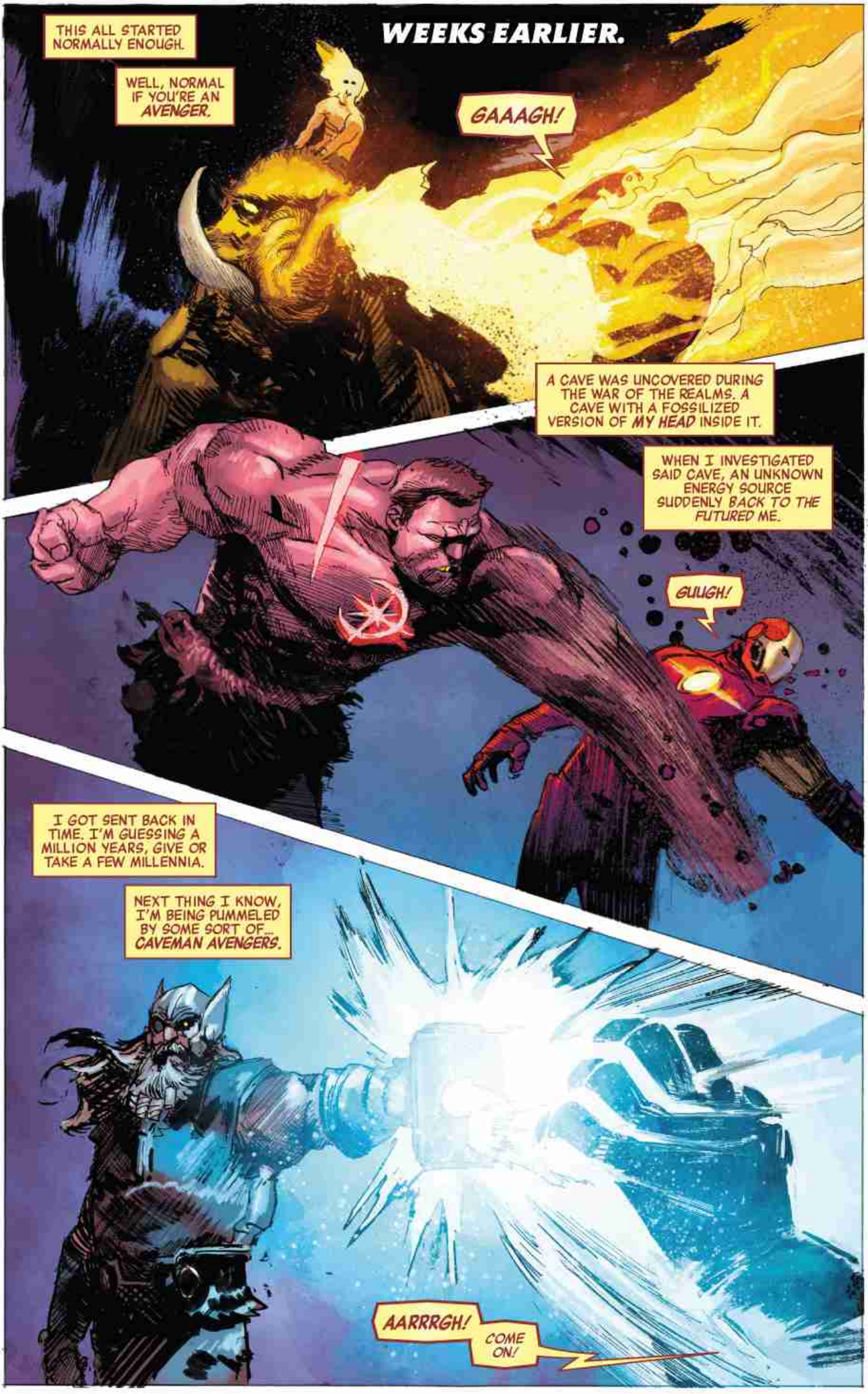
AND WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO OFFER?
FLESH. FLESH AND BLOOD.
COUPLE THAT WITH MY DAD'S RELENTLESS COMMITMENT TO NETWORKING AND POWER-MONGERING ON THE GRANDEST/SHADIEST OF LEVELS...AND THE OLD MAN SOMETIMES MADE STRANGE BEDFELLOWS FOR HIMSELF.

THE MASTER ALREADY HAS THESE THINGS.
SOUL. THEN WE OFFER OUR SOULS.
WHOA.
AND I ONLY WISH I WAS USING THAT PHRASE FIGURATIVELY. GOD, THE THINGS I'VE SEEN. WHY COULDN'T I HAVE JUST PLAYED MORE VIDEO GAMES?

AH, YES. FOR THAT...THE MASTER MIGHT BE WILLING TO BARTER.
FOR INSTANCE, THERE WAS THE TIME WHEN I WAS NINE AND WANTED TO TRY OUT SOME NEW X-RAY CONTACTS I'D DESIGNED DURING A PARTICULARLY CREEPY PARTY MY DAD WAS THROWING.
WHAT SAY YOU, MASTER?
THE MASTER SAYS...
HEY!
MOSTLY ALL I SAW WERE SOME POWERFUL PEOPLE IN THEIR UNDERWEAR. SOME OF THOSE PEOPLE I'D WIND UP PUNCHING IN THE FACE WITH IRON GAUNTLETS ONE DAY.
BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE, TOO.
WHAT THE HELL'S THIS KID DOING HERE?
SOMETHING THAT HAUNTED ME IN MY DREAMS UNTIL I WAS ABLE TO START DRINKING THEM AWAY.
THAT WAS THE NIGHT I SAW THE FACE OF THE DEVIL.
AAAAAGGGHHH!

OR AT LEAST... I THINK I DID. HARD TO SAY. IT WAS A LOOOOONG TIME AGO.
ONE MILLION YEARS AGO.
FEELS LONGER THAN EVER THESE DAYS. MAYBE BECAUSE IT IS.
REMEMBER WHAT I SAID ABOUT BEING GOOD AT GETTING INTO TROUBLE?
HE SEND YOU? OR ARE YOU JUST HUNGRY?
DOESN'T REALLY MATTER, I GUESS.
YEAH, SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE.
I'LL ASK HIM MYSELF WHEN HE COMES AROUND.


THAT WAS A WASTE OF VIBRANIUM FUEL. WHAT, DO I THINK I'M SENDING HIM A MESSAGE? A WARNING?
OR MAYBE I'M THE ONE WHO'S JUST HUNGRY.
THERE'S NO MORE VIBRANIUM LEFT IN THE CAVE. I'VE GOT ENOUGH TO POWER ME THROUGH A FEW MORE NIGHTS.
OR HELL, MAYBE JUST ONE MORE NIGHT.
DEPENDS ON THE NIGHT, I GUESS.
DEPENDS ON WHEN THE DEVIL COMES BY FOR ANOTHER VISIT.


THIS ALL STARTED NORMALLY ENOUGH.
WELL, NORMAL IF YOU'RE AN AVENGER.
WEEKS EARLIER.
GAAAGH!
A CAVE WAS UNCOVERED DURING THE WAR OF THE REALMS. A CAVE WITH A FOSSILIZED VERSION OF MY HEAD INSIDE IT.
WHEN I INVESTIGATED SAID CAVE, AN UNKNOWN ENERGY SOURCE SUDDENLY BACK TO THE FUTURED ME.
GULUGH!
I GOT SENT BACK IN TIME. I'M GUESSING A MILLION YEARS, GIVE OR TAKE A FEW MILLENNIA.
NEXT THING I KNOW, I'M BEING PUMMELED BY SOME SORT OF... CAVEMAN AVENGERS.
AARRRGH!
COME ON!

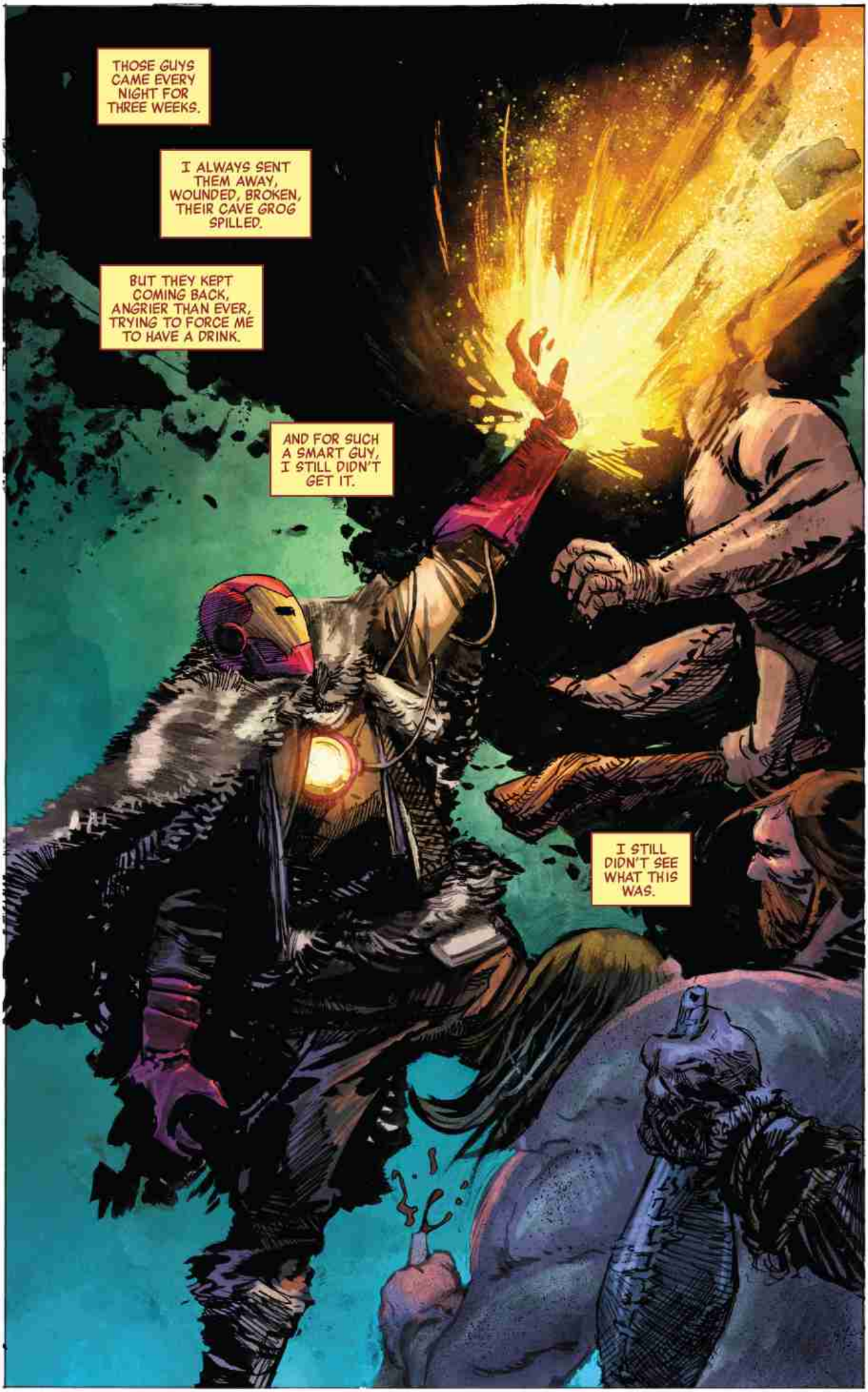
LIKE I SAID, NORMAL ENOUGH. BUT THEN THINGS GOT WEIRD.
LOOK, GHOST RIDER SNUFFALUFFAGUS AND BROCK LESNAR STARBRAND ARE ONE THING, BUT NO WAY AM I GETTING SLAPPED AROUND BY THOR'S DADDY!
YOU PEOPLE ARE MAKING A MISTAKE. I KNOW I SEEM ALL FRIGHTFULLY SMART AND FUTURISTIC, AND...I AM, BUT I'M NOT THE BAD GUY HERE! I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE HERE...
WHOA, YOU GUYS HAVE YOUR OWN PHOENIX.
DO THE X-MEN KNOW ABOUT THIS?
ANTHONY STARK.
YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED HERE FOR A REASON, BUT NOT BY US.
LADY, I DON'T LIKE YOU BEING INSIDE MY HEAD. I DON'T ALWAYS LIKE ME BEING IN THERE.
WE CAN BE OF NO AID TO YOU. THE TRIALS THAT ARE TO COME MUST BE FACED ALONE.
JUST TRY TO REMEMBER, MAN OF IRON...

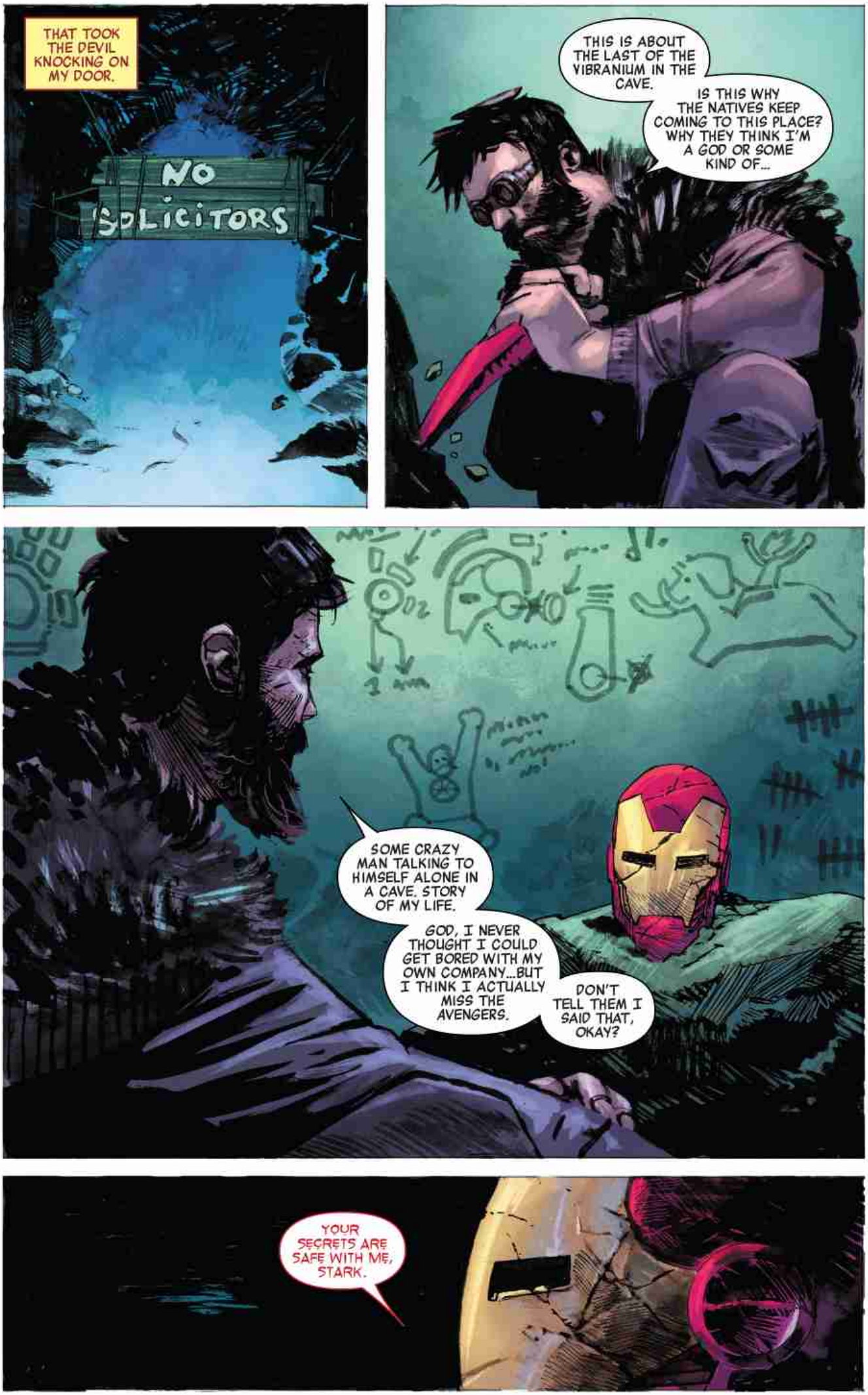
REMEMBER THE FACE OF THE DEVIL.
GAAAGH!
YOU CAN NEVER TRUST THOSE PHOENIXES, CAN YOU? SHE SUCKER PUNCHED ME AND SENT ME FLYING FOR MILES.
MY ARMOR WAS ALREADY DAMAGED FROM THE FIGHT. THE LANDING SURE DIDN'T HELP.
THIS IS LIKE A BAD JOKE. IRON MAN, TRAPPED IN THE STONE AGE.
UUUGH. RUN DIAGNOSTIC.
POWER INSUFFICIENT. WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO GUIDE YOU TO THE NEAREST STARK TECH CHARGING STATION?
DON'T THINK THAT'LL BE NECESSARY. SOMETHING TELLS ME...WE'RE ALREADY HOME.
EXCEPT I HAVEN'T LAUGHED ONCE.
CAVES.
WHY'S IT ALWAYS HAVE TO BE CAVES?

NOT SINCE THAT FIRST NIGHT.
DIVERT ALL POWER TO SCANS. SEARCH FOR VIBRANIUM, URANIUM, ANYTHING WE CAN USE AS A FUEL SOURCE.
SEARCHING.
FIRST I'LL FIX THE ARMOR, THEN I CAN FIND A TIME MACHINE. THERE'S ALWAYS ONE LYING AROUND SOMEWHERE.
'TIL THEN, JUST HAVE TO BE CAREFUL NOT TO STEP ON ANY BUTTERFLIES OR GET KILLED BY--
UNG.
WHOA. THAT'S CLOSE ENOUGH.
UNGA.
UMM. HI.
IS THAT... SOME KINDA CAVE GROG?
YEAH, THAT'S CAVE GROG, I CAN SMELL IT FROM HERE.
UNGA.
WOW, GUESS I'M SO IMPRESSIVE I'VE MADE THE LOCALS WORSHIP ME WITHOUT EVEN TRYING.
SORRY, CAVE LADY, BUT I WOULDN'T MAKE A VERY GOOD GOD. YOU SHOULD PROBABLY GET BACK TO YOUR...

...PEOPLE.
THEY CAME EVERY NIGHT FOR A WEEK.
AND I TURNED THEM AWAY EVERY TIME.
EVEN AS THE NIGHTS GOT COLDER. LONELIER. THIRSTIER.
ON THE EIGHTH DAY, THERE WAS STILL AN OFFERING OF WINE, BUT THIS TIME, INSTEAD OF BOWING CAVE WOMEN...

...THERE WERE ROCKS. AND BIG CLUBS.
AND SOME SERIOUSLY ANGRY ANCESTORS.


THOSE GUYS CAME EVERY NIGHT FOR THREE WEEKS.
I ALWAYS SENT THEM AWAY, WOUNDED, BROKEN, THEIR CAVE GROG SPILLED.
BUT THEY KEPT COMING BACK, ANGRIER THAN EVER, TRYING TO FORCE ME TO HAVE A DRINK.
AND FOR SUCH A SMART GUY, I STILL DIDN'T GET IT.
I STILL DIDN'T SEE WHAT THIS WAS.


THAT TOOK THE DEVIL KNOCKING ON MY DOOR.
NO SOLICITORS
THIS IS ABOUT THE LAST OF THE VIBRANIUM IN THE CAVE.
IS THIS WHY THE NATIVES KEEP COMING TO THIS PLACE? WHY THEY THINK I'M A GOD OR SOME KIND OF...
SOME CRAZY MAN TALKING TO HIMSELF ALONE IN A CAVE. STORY OF MY LIFE.
GOD, I NEVER THOUGHT I COULD GET BORED WITH MY OWN COMPANY...BUT I THINK I ACTUALLY MISS THE AVENGERS.
DON'T TELL THEM I SAID THAT, OKAY?
YOUR SECRETS ARE SAFE WITH ME, STARK.

THE ONBOARD SYSTEMS DIED YESTERDAY. INCLUDING THE VOICE MODULE.
AND THIS IS A VOICE I CAN FEEL IN MY COCKLES.
I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I HAD COCKLES.
WHO AM I TALKING TO?
A VERY OLD FRIEND.
I DIDN'T REALIZE I HAD ANY OF THOSE HERE.
OH, WE HAVEN'T MET YET. NOT IN THIS AGE. BUT I'M A BIT BEYOND THINGS LIKE TIME.
I TEND TO AGREE MYSELF. EXCEPT WHEN IT'S MY TIME. I ASSUME YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S BEEN SENDING ME THE NIGHTLY GIFTS?
I THINK YOU MISUNDERSTAND MY INTENTIONS. THEY'RE NOT GIFTS.
I WISH TO PURCHASE SOMETHING FROM YOU.
NO THANKS. I KNOW THE ARMOR'S SEEN BETTER DAYS, BUT IT STILL ISN'T FOR SALE.
I HAVE NO INTEREST IN YOUR ARMOR, IRON MAN.
NOT THE ONE YOU WEAR ON THE OUTSIDE, AT LEAST.
TELL ME, STARK...WHAT WOULD YOU TAKE FOR YOUR SOUL?

SORRY, BUT I'M PRETTY SURE I TRADED THAT FOR A DAIQUIRI IN 1998. I COULD GIVE YOU A GOOD DEAL ON A GALLBLADDER, THOUGH.
TELL ME, DO YOU KNOW HOW SOMEONE BECOMES THE SMARTEST MAN IN THE WORLD?
WELL, I KNOW HOW I DID IT.
NO, YOU DON'T. YOU DON'T KNOW THE PRICE THAT WAS PAID.
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT COST HOWARD STARK.
HOW COULD YOU KNOW THAT NAME? WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
YOU BELONG TO ME, LITTLE STARK. NO MATTER THE ERA.
WHY DO YOU THINK HOWARD ADOPTED YOU? YOU WERE THE PRICE HE HAD TO PAY.
LOOK INTO MY EYES, TONY.
YOU KNOW ME.
I'M YOUR REAL FA--
RRRRRGGH!
I COULD'VE HIT IT WITH A REPULSOR BLAST.
BUT I WANTED TO KILL SOMETHING WITH MY OWN HANDS.
IT TOOK ME A WHILE TO REALIZE...
...THAT WAS YET ANOTHER *TEMPTATION.*

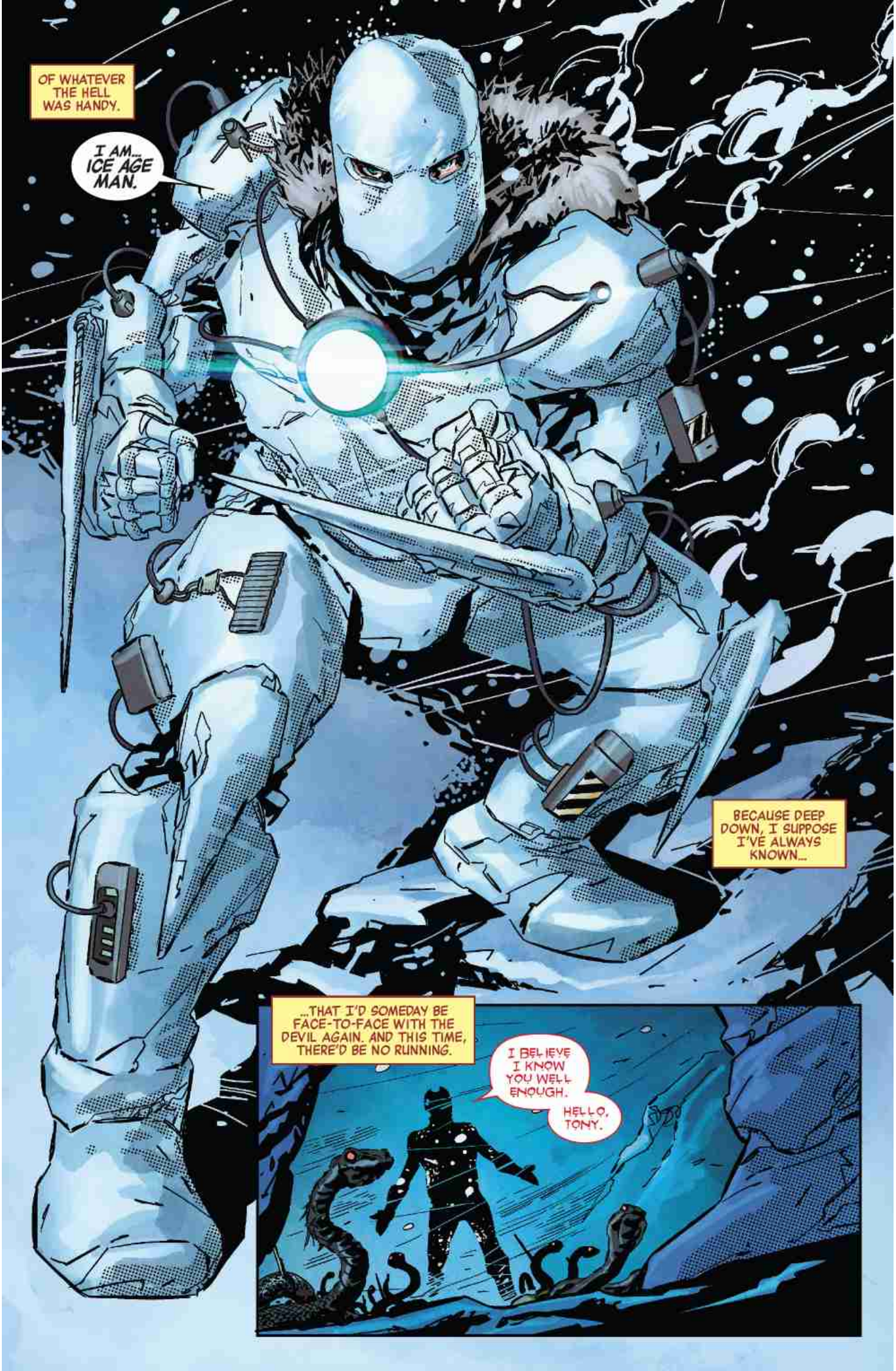
I HAVEN'T BEEN VISITED SINCE.
EXCEPT BY HUNGER AND COLD AND FRUSTRATION. SOME BIG CATS.
MAYBE A BIT OF MADNESS. HARD TO TELL.
NO SOLICITOR
ALL I KNOW IS THAT THE SNAKE KNOWS SOMETHING.
(OKAY, YEAH, DEFINITELY SOME MADNESS.)
THE SNAKE BROUGHT ME HERE. AND IT KNOWS HOW TO GET ME HOME. SO I'VE BEEN TRYING TO CALL IT OUT. KILLING EVERY SNAKE I CAN FIND.
IT FINALLY WORKS.
ONLY THIS TIME... THE BASTARD DOESN'T SEND A SNAKE.

IF THERE ARE GHOST RIDERS AND IRON FISTS AND STARBRANDS IN THIS ERA, STANDS TO REASON THERE'D ALSO BE SUPER BAD GUYS.
LIKE A GORGILLA WITH AN INFINITY STONE.
THE *POWER STONE*, TO BE EXACT.
NOT SURE HOW THIS PART IS A TEMPTATION.
EXCEPT IT TEMPTS ME TO WANT TO DIE.

GRAPE APE LEAVES ME FOR DEAD.
HE MIGHT BE RIGHT.
ARMOR IS COMPLETELY TRASHED NOW. THERE'S NO WAY I CAN HOPE TO FIX THIS. NOT IN A CAVE IN THE STONE AGE.
AND THIS ISN'T THE END. I KNOW HE'S STILL COMING.
I KNOW THE DEVIL WILL BE BACK. FOR ONE LAST TEMPTATION.
AND IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM, WELL, YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY...

LUCKILY, I'VE NEVER GIVEN A DAMN WHAT PEOPLE SAY.
OKAY. SO YOUR FANCY ARMOR IS COMPLETELY RUINED.
BUT IRON MAN WAS NEVER THE WEAPON.
I AM.
STILL SOME POWER LEFT IN THE VIBRANIUM BATTERIES. JUST NEED A WAY TO HOUSE IT. CHANNEL IT.
IT'S ONE OF MY ONLY REDEEMING QUALITIES.
BUT RIGHT NOW, I DON'T NEED TO BE REDEEMED. I JUST NEED TO SURVIVE.
AND HERE'S THE THING THAT DEFINES WHO I AM IN THE BEST AND WORST OF WAYS.
WHAT DO I HAVE TO WORK WITH?
NOTHING.
I'M IN CAVEMAN TIMES, IN THE MIDDLE OF A BLIZZARD THAT NEVER ENDS. THERE'S NOTHING HERE BUT...
TONY STARK DOES HIS BEST WORK... WHEN HE'S WORKING TO NOT DIE.
NOTHING BUT AN ICE AGE.
GUESS THAT'LL HAVE TO DO.

PRETTY SURE I BECAME AN ATHEIST IN THE WOMB.
NO SOLICITORS
THOR MIGHT TELL YOU IT'S BECAUSE I REFUSE TO BELIEVE IN ANYTHING GREATER THAN MYSELF--EVEN WHEN IT'S STANDING RIGHT NEXT TO ME, CRACKLING WITH LIGHTNING AND SMELLING OF MEAD.
AND I SUPPOSE THAT'S TRUE WHEN IT COMES TO FAIRY GODFATHERS IN THE SKY.
BUT THE DEVIL IS A WHOLE DIFFERENT MATTER. HIM, I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED IN. EVER SINCE HE WAS THE GUEST OF HONOR AT MY DAD'S PARTY.
ZOMBIE SNAKES? YOU'RE COMING HERE TO TRY TO BUY THE BOUGIEST SOUL ON THE PLANET, AND YOU THINK ZOMBIE SNAKES ARE GONNA SEAL THE DEAL FOR YOU?
I SUPPOSE THAT'S WHY I'VE ALWAYS BUILT AN ARMOR BETWEEN ME AND THE WORLD.
AN ARMOR OF WIT. OF IRON. OF A BOTTLE.
I HATE TO SAY, "DON'T YOU KNOW WHO I AM," BUT SERIOUSLY, DON'T YOU KNOW WHO THE STARK I AM?
IF NOT, PLEASE ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF.


OF WHATEVER THE HELL WAS HANDY.
I AM... ICE AGE MAN.
BECAUSE DEEP DOWN, I SUPPOSE I'VE ALWAYS KNOWN...
...THAT I'D SOMEDAY BE FACE-TO-FACE WITH THE DEVIL AGAIN. AND THIS TIME, THERE'D BE NO RUNNING.
I BELIEVE I KNOW YOU WELL ENOUGH.
HELLO, TONY.

HELLO, SON.
I WAS 9 YEARS OLD WHEN I SAW THE FACE OF THE DEVIL.
THOUGH IN TRUTH, I'D SEEN IT MANY TIMES BEFORE.
AAAAAGGGHHH!
YOU'RE A BIT EARLY, BOY.
I'D JUST NEVER SEEN IT FOR WHAT IT WAS.
COME BACK WHEN YOU'RE OLDER AND HAVE SOMETHING WORTH BARTERING.
FOR YOUR SOUL'S ALREADY BEEN SOLD, TONY STARK.
X-RAY CONTACTS. I KNEW ALL ALONG IT WAS YOU, DAD.
BUT THAT SOMEHOW ONLY MADE IT SCARIER.
FINDING OUT YOUR "FATHER" IS THE HEAD OF SOME KINDA SECRET SATANIC MILLIONAIRES CLUB. I SUPPOSE THAT'S PART OF GROWING UP.
MAYBE SOMEDAY I'LL FIGURE OUT HOW TO DO THAT.
HOWARD?
NO. YOU... YOU'RE NOT...

YOU'RE NOT MY FATHER!
WELL... ADOPTIVE FATHER, RIGHT? THAT'S CLOSE ENOUGH.
BUT WE BOTH KNOW, TONY, THERE'S MORE OF ME IN YOU THAN YOU'D EVER ADMIT.
AND IF YOU THINK YOU'RE FINALLY READY TO REACH YOUR FULL POTENTIAL...TO LEAVE YOUR OLD CAVE BEHIND ONCE AND FOR ALL...
WELL, I'M HERE TO OFFER YOU THAT OPPORTUNITY, SON.
I'LL TEACH YOU ALL THE SECRETS OF MY SUCCESS. I'LL TEACH YOU HOW WORLDS ARE WON AND RULED.
AND YOU WILL RULE, SON. THE WAY IT WAS ALWAYS MEANT TO BE.
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS TAKE MY HAND.
AND SAY "PLEASE."

YOU SHOULD'VE STUCK WITH HOT CAVEWOMEN AND WINE. BELIEVE ME, THIS ISN'T THE WAY TO TEMPT ME.
UNLESS YOU WERE TEMPTING ME TO WANT TO KILL YOU.
IT'S NOT HOWARD. IT CAN'T BE. HE'S DEAD. AND HE WON'T EVEN BE BORN FOR A MILLION YEARS.
WHO ARE YOU?
I'M YOUR FATHER.
NO MORE LIES! YOU'RE NOT HOWARD STARK!
WELL, I NEVER SAID I WAS.
THOUGH HE IS AN OLD FRIEND.
I JUST SAID I WAS YOUR FATHER, TONY. WOULD I LIE ABOUT SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
GO AHEAD, LOOK IN MY EYES.
CAN'T YOU SEE THE RESEMBLANCE?

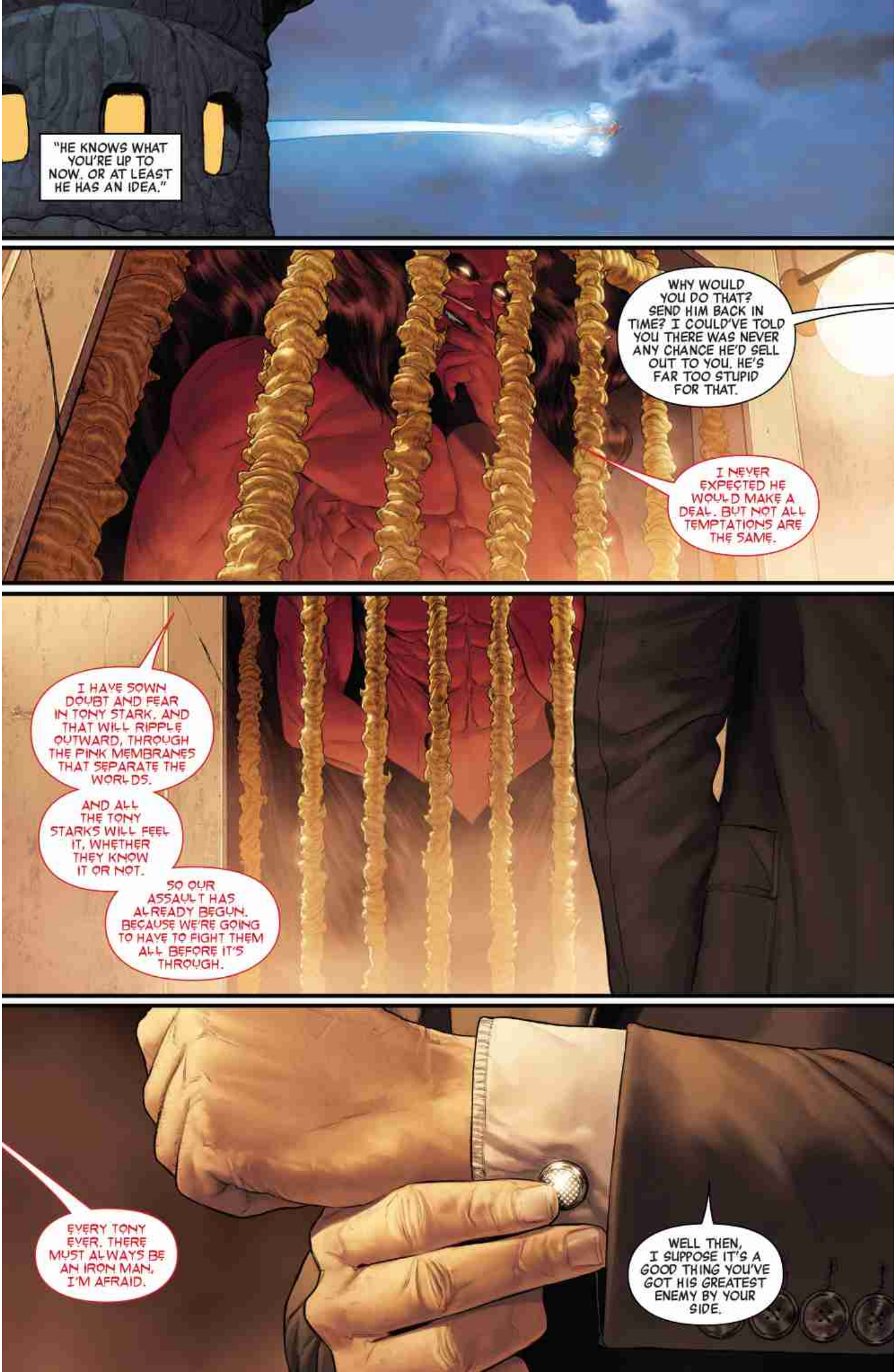
MEPHISTO. ONE OF THE KINGS OF HELL. BUT HOW DOES A DEVIL FROM ONE MILLION B.C. KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT ME AND MY...
AH. IT'S NOT JUST THE DEVIL. IT'S THE DEVIL WITH A TIME STONE.
I SPOKE THE TRUTH WITH YOUR FATHER'S TONGUE, TONY. HE PROMISED YOU TO ME.
OR WELL, HE WILL. SOMEDAY MANY MANY YEARS FROM NOW. I'VE SEEN IT IN THE STONE.
AND DON'T YOU THINK IT'D BE EASIER FOR EVERYONE INVOLVED IF I JUST COLLECTED ON IT NOW?
GAAAGGH!
BOW TO ME, TONY STARK. AND WE'LL REWRITE THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD TOGETHER, YOU AND I.
BECOME MY DEVIL IN IRON.

HE'S LOSING. THAT COULD CHANGE ALL OF HUMAN HISTORY.
I DON'T KNOW, THIS GUY SEEMS LIKE A JERK. ARE WE SURE IT'S A BAD IDEA IF HE NEVER EXISTED?
THERE MUST ALWAYS BE A TONY STARK. IN EVERY EXISTENCE.
AND WE WILL NEED THEM ALL. ESPECIALLY THIS ONE.
THEN WHAT DO WE DO? HOW DO WE HELP HIM?
WE CANNOT. THE MAN OF IRON MUST WIN THIS BATTLE...
"...ALONE."
THE MORE VIBRANIUM POWER I USE, THE FASTER THE ICE ARMOR MELTS.
HAVE TO TAKE MY SHOT NOW. WITH EVERYTHING I'VE GOT LEFT.
YOU'RE A MAN OF REASON, STARK, AND I'VE MADE YOU A REASONABLE PROPOSAL.
SAVE YOURSELF THE TROUBLE OF EVER BEING BORN. I WILL WRITE YOU AN ENTIRELY NEW LIFE.
ONE WITHOUT HOWARD. WITHOUT A HEART FULL OF SHRAPNEL. WITHOUT THE DEMON IN THE BOTTLE.
I WILL MAKE YOU EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HERO, COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED.
TONY STARK. THE ONE AND ONLY AVENGER.
I'VE GOT A BETTER IDEA. AND I'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT...

...IN A MILLION YEARS!
I MAY BE AN ATHEIST, BUT I HAVE LEARNED A THING OR TWO FROM THE GODS OVER THE YEARS.
THOR TAUGHT ME THAT WHEN IN DOUBT...ALWAYS PUNCH THE SHINY THING.
SO I SHOOT EVERY LAST OUNCE OF MY POWER AT THE TIME STONE.
AND THINK WARM THOUGHTS OF HOME.
HA, WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE RUNNING TO, STARK? THERE'S NOWHERE OUTSIDE MY DOMAIN.

NOWHERE. AND NO WHEN.
BUT IT'S NOT *HOME* I SEE AS MY ATOMS ARE TORN APART.
IT'S *HORRORS.*
FROM THE PAST. THE FUTURE. FROM A TIME THAT'S MEANT TO BE MY OWN, BUT THAT...I SHUDDER TO RECOGNIZE.
THERE'S NO MORE WAKANDA. ASGARD IS A LOST LEGEND.
AND STEVE... WHY IS STEVE SHOOTING GREEN DRUGS INTO HIS EYEBALL?
WHY IS THE FLESH MELTING OFF CAROL'S FACE?
AND WHAT IN THE NAME OF ALL THAT'S HOLY HAPPENED TO THE THING?
MAYBE I SHOULD ASK THE OLD WOLVERINE WHO'S ON FIRE.
OR THE GIRLS WITH HAMMERS.
OR THE CREEPY STARBRAND BABY.
OR THE NEW PHOENIX. WAIT, ARE THEY NEW? I THINK I KNOW THEM.
BUT INSTEAD I'M JUST STARING AT MY OWN FACE, DRUNK OUT OF MY GOURD, WITH ANTS POURING OUT OF MY MOUTH AS I SCREAM.
MY EYES ARE WIDE, AND REFLECTED IN THEM...IS AN INFINITY OF DEVILS.
BUT NOT A SINGLE DAMN AVENGER.
I'M STILL SCREAMING WHEN BLACK PANTHER FINDS ME ALONE IN THE CAVE.

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YEAR IT IS, UNTIL I SEE THE WAKANDAN HELICARRIER OUTSIDE.
T'CHALLA WANTS TO KNOW WHERE I'VE BEEN, WHAT'S HAPPENED TO ME.
BUT BEFORE I TELL HIM ANYTHING, I SAY I NEED A RIDE.
AND I GO STRAIGHT TO VEGAS.
MEPHISTO!
AH, HELLO, TONY. BEEN IN ANY GOOD CAVES LATELY?
DOCTOR STRANGE TOLD ME WHERE TO FIND YOU. TOLD ME YOU'VE BEEN LOCKED UP HERE EVER SINCE YOU LOST THE THRONE OF HELL.
I WANTED TO SEE YOU, FACE-TO-FACE.
IT'S BEEN A MILLION YEARS NOW, HASN'T IT? BUT THE OFFER IS MOST ASSUREDLY STILL GOOD. DOES THIS MEAN YOU'VE GOT AN ANSWER TO MY PROPOSAL?
YOU BET I DO.
KISS MY IRON ASS.


"HE KNOWS WHAT YOU'RE UP TO NOW. OR AT LEAST HE HAS AN IDEA."
WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT? SEND HIM BACK IN TIME? I COULD'VE TOLD YOU THERE WAS NEVER ANY CHANCE HE'D SELL OUT TO YOU. HE'S FAR TOO STUPID FOR THAT.
I NEVER EXPECTED HE WOULD MAKE A DEAL. BUT NOT ALL TEMPTATIONS ARE THE SAME.
I HAVE SOWN DOUBT AND FEAR IN TONY STARK, AND THAT WILL RIPPLE OUTWARD, THROUGH THE PINK MEMBRANES THAT SEPARATE THE WORLDS.
AND ALL THE TONY STARKS WILL FEEL IT, WHETHER THEY KNOW IT OR NOT.
SO OUR ASSAULT HAS ALREADY BEGUN. BECAUSE WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO FIGHT THEM ALL BEFORE IT'S THROUGH.
EVERY TONY EVER. THERE MUST ALWAYS BE AN IRON MAN, I'M AFRAID.
WELL THEN, I SUPPOSE IT'S A GOOD THING YOU'VE GOT HIS GREATEST ENEMY BY YOUR SIDE.

NO ONE KNOWS MY BOY LIKE I DO.
HOW TO BUILD HIM.
AND HOW TO BREAK HIM.
YES. LET'S HEAR MORE ABOUT THAT, MY DEAR HOWARD.
YES, MASTER. I AM YOURS TO COMMAND.
ALL HAIL MEPHISTO.

EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES

THE AVENGERS #32

EARTH'S MIGHTIEST VILLAINS

What do the King of Atlantis, the Lord of the Vampires, the deposed duke of Hell, a mysterious Russian assassin and the secret boss of Washington, DC's greatest super-team have in common? They all really hate the Avengers. And so there came a day, a day unlike any other, when Earth's mightiest villains found themselves united against a common threat...

AVENGERS ASSEMBLE! EMAIL US AT MHEROES@MARVEL.COM AND MARK YOUR MESSAGES "OKAY TO PRINT" FOR A CHANCE TO SEE THEM ANSWERED IN FUTURE ISSUES!

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ZONE